

ligious character. It is the most curious, as it is the most ancient Gothic edifice in Paris.

Gratified with our visit, we retrace our steps to the Palais de Justice, to examine its incomparably elegant Sainte-Chapelle. It is a veritable *chef-d'œuvre* of Gothic art—admiration of the artists of all countries. For years it has been partially concealed by scaffoldings, wooden sheds, and houses in a state of demolition, so that it was almost impossible to visit it or get a view of it. Each year considerable sums have been devoted to its restoration, and a hope has been entertained that during the alterations and enlargements which have been carried on at the Palais de Justice means would be adopted to isolate this beautiful chapel, and disengage it entirely from the miserable buildings which disfigured it; or at any rate, that no new construction would be permitted near it.

One would have supposed that common sense and artistic taste would have suggested a respect for the elegant building which it is pretended to restore; but this is not the case. Far from leaving it exposed to public admiration, the space around it is being gradually inclosed by buildings attached to the Palais de Justice; and, what is worse, these plain modern constructions, well enough in themselves, are actually brought in contact with the chapel itself; disfiguring it by the contrast of their heaviness with its elegance and lightness. It is really too bad. For 600 years the Sainte-Chapelle has existed almost untouched; and now, when pretending to restore it, it is about to be buried amidst a mass of heavy masonry.

Victor Hugo, as far back as 1832, in his *Notre Dame de Paris*, raised a cry of complaint at the vandalism committed by unworthy architects upon the remains of the middle ages, and not without success. There has been a party, and we might say there is a party, who carry their democratic principles so far, as to think that the destruction of everything that can recall to mind the slavery of feudalism is a worthy and essential object of pursuit; and a society still exists, rich and prosperous, founded upon such principles, among whose members are many individuals, drawn into it no doubt from a love of gain, whom we should be disposed to imagine would be the last to be connected with such a body: a better taste is prevailing, however. *Notre Dame* is restored; the *Sainte Chapelle*, with its beautiful stained-glass windows, is renovated; *St. Germain l'Auxerrois* is not taken down, but repaired; the tower of *St. Jacques de la Boucherie* still remains standing, and is even threatened with restoration also; the admirable Chapel of Vincennes has been spared; the ancient Royal Abbey of *St. Germain-des-Prés*, built in 558, and magnificent in interior decoration, has escaped everything but reparation. In short, the appeals of the learned and the influence of religion have brought back a respect for the ancient, and where no absolute necessity existed for destruction, for the accommodation of a railway terminus, or the construction of a new street, the relics of former taste and skill have been renovated and protected.

Having gratified our curiosity on the *Ile de la Cité*, and excited at the same time a taste for Gothic restorations, we determined to cross the river to visit the church of *St. Germain*. On our way we traversed the *Place de Grève*, formerly the chosen spot for public executions, and stopped to admire for a while a beautiful little turret which stands at the upper corner of a house on the north-west side, and is almost the only remains of the style of building which characterized the "Place" in olden time. We were more than half inclined, as we admired its light and airy appearance beside the plain and formal façades of modern houses, to regret the loss of this architectural ornament of other days. It must soon disappear, with the picturesque edifices of which it formed so essential a part, to make room for an enlargement of the Place, in unison with the extent and grandeur of the modernized *Hôtel de Ville*.

In passing round this latter building, we came among a mass of houses in course of demolition, which we had the curiosity to stop and examine minutely. They were ancient, and were disposed to admire and to be lenient. But the aspect of their interior arrangements, now exposed to view, the lowness of the rooms, the wretched, uncouth, and irregular character

of the oaken staircases, the miserable narrow entrances and low passages, ill-ventilated, ill-arranged, badly lighted, incommodious,—damped the ardour of admiration which the thought of airy-looking turrets and picturesque gable-ends, and all the bold, intricate, yet rich and delicate ornamentations of the Gothic, the Norman, or the Byzantine, for an hour or two had created in our mind.

We passed on to *St. Gervais*, to view the paintings being executed in one of the chapels. It is that in which is the baptismal font. The pillars and the windows are covered with arabesques and ornaments, most delicately cut; the ceiling is rich and florid in sculpture; and the key-stone, as well as the mouldings in the nave of the church, are gilded. Painted glass windows have replaced those by *Pisaigrier*,—of which remained but little,—and for colour and drawing surpass the works of the ancients. These, with the architectural wonder of the little chapel of the Virgin, apparently ensuspended from the ceiling, make this church one of the most attractive. It has at the same time a fine front, but which, like that of *St. Eustache*, is in no way suited to the style of the rest of the building.

From *St. Gervais* we again crossed the river by the *Pont d'Arcole*, passed the spot where the house of *Abelard* and *Heloise* once stood, viewed again the imposing front of *Notre Dame*, and then traversing the new bridge and the new quays, dived into the midst of that antiquated and irregular mass of streets and buildings which mark the sides of the hill, crowned by the *Pantheon*. This is the *Mount St. Geneviève*, celebrated for its beautiful church, and for a convent once existing there, of which only a tower remains, remnant of antiquity peculiarly precious to the connoisseur.

We were in search of a modern curiosity, but the ancient prevailed for a moment in our mind over the new, and we were tempted to enter *St. Etienne du Mont*, to view its beautiful screen or gallery—for it has the character of both,—and the tomb of the *Patroness Saint* of Paris. The tomb was black as age and the smoke of farthing lights, ever burning from century to century, could make it. We passed on, praising the religious zeal, and pitying the superstition, which has grown in the shadow of time, out of the traditions of savagery and ignorance, and proceeded to the new Library of *Saint Geneviève*. This has been built to the north of the *Pantheon*, at the back of an old edifice temporarily occupied by the library, and is now almost finished. As the scaffolding is removed, we can at present judge a little of its effect. It is a curiosity of its kind, being quite original in design, and not to be compared to any other building that we are acquainted with. The façade is simple—we would say plain—having little ornament and less variety, and is relieved almost solely by the multitude of names of celebrated authors, of all times and countries, which are cut in tablets let into the walls on every side, and nearly covering them. Among these figures, in golden array, our *Shakespeares*, and *Goldsmiths*, and *Newtons*—men who belong to France for the simple reason that they belong by their genius to humanity. Above and below these tablets are festoons of flowers, cut elegantly in the stonework, running the whole length of the edifice: beyond this nothing can exceed the severe plainness and originality of the building.

We might find fault—who cannot? who has not? But so long as there is no glaring impropriety of style, so long as proportion is not absolutely outraged, so long as common sense is not wounded by any extravagance or ridiculous confusion, we feel that we ought to be pleased at the effort. The edifice is peculiar, is original—and we like it for that. It will not please everybody, how can it?—when one is enamoured with the Gothic, another with the Grecian, a third with the Roman or Italian, and a fourth, perhaps, with the Arabian, the Egyptian, the Hindoo, or the Chinese! There are beauties in each: let each have perfect liberty of choice; but having the liberty to choose, let him not find fault tyrannically with the choice, the whims, or loves of others. We would rather see a little more originality than that interminable system of copying, which, by enforcing by strict rule, and limiting within certain bounds, what is boundless and

ever varying, drags genius always in the mire of imitation. The ardour of the scholar should not be damped or cramped by being made to regard the works of former men as complete, as efforts beyond his reach, subjects for his admiration and worship; but he should be taught to regard them as stepping-stones to endless expansion of mind. Literature, the arts, the sciences, politics, morality, ay and religion, have suffered by this superstitious and selfish limitation of the natural liberty of the human mind. It is time to be tolerant in all things, in order to be more perfect, more exact, and more capable.

Before terminating our present promenade, let us remark, that a commission has just been formed to examine into the complaint respecting the hiding of the *Sainte Chapelle* behind a mass of stone edifices. As more room is required for the necessary additions to the *Palais de Justice*, and no other space presents itself, it is probable that a compromise will be entered into, and that, as suggested, some of the new buildings will not be carried higher than one story.

#### ROYAL INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

THE ordinary meeting of the 4th inst. was numerously attended, to listen to a dissertation by the Rev. Richard Burgess, on the *Mole of Hadrian*, now the *Castel S. Angelo*, at Rome, one of a valuable and interesting series on the architectural remains of the *Eternal City*, which have been laid before the Institute by that gentleman. Before the paper was read, *Mons. Giry* (*architecte de la ville*) of Caen, and *Herr Heidehoff*, of Nuremberg, were elected honorary and corresponding members; and *Mr. Henry Clutton*, previously an associate, was elected a fellow.

The honorary secretary announced the death of *Mons. Debret*, of Paris, an honorary member of the Institute, and of whom a brief notice will be found in the present number of our journal.

*Mr. Tite* exhibited a memorandum of an account for business done by the late *Sir John Soane* for *Mr. Beckford*, of *Fonthill*, with the receipt annexed. The whole is in the handwriting of *Sir John*, and a copy will be found in another part of our journal.

*Mr. Tite* further said, he had been requested by some of the younger members of the profession to make an inquiry concerning the building for the '51 Exposition. It was very satisfactory to find *Mr. Donaldson*, their honorary secretary, upon the committee for arranging matters connected with that building. *Mr. Cockerell* was also upon that Committee, and an impression prevailed that let who would forward suggestions, *Messrs. Donaldson* and *Cockerell* were to carry out the building.

*Mr. Donaldson* said he was not sure that he ought to reply there; but he would venture to say that no course in respect of the suggestions for the plan that would be received had been determined on, and that all ideas found valuable would be fully acknowledged. It was to be a temporary building only.

The Chairman (*Mr. Smirke*) was not certain as to the wisdom of offering no pecuniary reward for designs; he thought the over-showings of the flesh pots might have fallen for the advantage of architects.

*Mr. Burgess* then proceeded to read the paper of the evening, which was characterized by the humour, intelligence, and learning of the Rev. gentleman's other contributions. Several of these will be found in other volumes of *THE BUILDER*, and we shall probably add to them the present essay in full. The paper was very fully illustrated, including some excellent sketches by *Mr. Gruner*, of the more modern decorations of the castle of *St. Angelo*.

In the course of an interesting conversation which followed, the honorary secretary said he had urged in letters to the secretary of the French Academy and others, the importance of obtaining an investigation of the present state of the monument and its decorations, but without good result at present.

*MICHELANGELO'S "LAST JUDGMENT"* is said to be on its way to London from Leghorn, in a steamer for Liverpool, whence it is to be forwarded under Government seals without being opened by the Customs' authorities.